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Hearing set in LSD suit against CIA

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A federal judge here Thursday ordered a hearing next month to decide if three former prisoners at the Atlanta penitentiary who were given LSD in secret CIA-sponsored experiments in 1956 can proceed with their lawsuit against the agency.

The order, signed by U.S. District Judge Richard Freeman, marks the latest step in a two-year-old lawsuit filed against the government as a result of a bizarre series of experiments sponsored by the CIA here during the 1950s.

Don R. Scott, Ferrell V. Kirk and James T. Knight — all former prisoners at the Atlanta federal pen who were used as human guinea pigs in the experiments — sued the government in 1981, alleging the government was negligent in overseeing the tests.

All three have suffered from hallucinations, flashbacks and paranoia for more than 20 years as a result of the LSD they were given, the 1981 complaint says.

The lawsuit also says that the three, who were part of a group of prisoners used in the experiments, were not told the real nature of the experiments, the possible hazards of ingesting LSD, or the fact that they were taking part in a CIA-sponsored project.

The experiments, overseen by former Emory University pharmacology professor Dr. Carl C. Pfeiffer, were designed to try to find a cure for schizophrenia and other mental illnesses. Prisoners were paid \$3 a week and promised favorable parole recommendations in return for their cooperation.

Pfeiffer now runs the Brain Bio Center of Princeton in Rocky Hill, N.J. He could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Freeman's order told government attorneys they must present evidence to support their claim that the prisoners' lawsuit should be dismissed because it was not filed until 1981 — more than 20 years after the experiments took place.